

STRAIGHTWAY

"AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM" (MARK 1:18).
CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Power of Darkness in the End Time: The Falling Away

Dr. H. T. Spence

How often we have reminded our reading audience that we are living in the End Time of the last days. Acts 2:16, 17 and Hebrews 1:2 assure us that the last days began with the coming of Christ to earth. Therefore, we have been in the last days for the past two thousand years. In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ also spoke of an "end time." When reading this chapter, we must acknowledge that our Saviour's words divided the End Time into two segments. While the early verses (24:4-8) reveal the *beginning* of the End Time, the latter verses (24:9-14) speak of the *end* of the End Time. The Last Days began with the first coming of Christ; the End Time of these Last Days is identified with the second coming of Christ.

The End-Time Cry

If we were to speculate a general time period in history for the beginning of the End Time (as it is linked

with the public burden of the second coming of Christ), we would place it perhaps somewhere between 1840 and 1860. It was during these years that additional insights into the truth of the Second Coming opened from the Word of God. The books of Daniel and Revelation unfolded with understanding to God's men, and more sermons were preached then about this Second Coming than previously noted in history. Perhaps this season was the "midnight" (Matt. 25:6) when "there was a cry made."

With this "cry" came a time of awakening, of trimming the lamps, and of checking the oil supply. There was a process of preparation given before the Bridegroom actually came, although the cry was given earlier. This is where we have been in the last 160 years. The "last days" began with the first coming of Christ, and the End Time will be identified with the Second Coming in both the secret rapture and the open

coming of the Lord of Revelation 19.

In Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus made it very clear that the beginning of the End Time will reveal changes in religion, in weather, and in politics or government. But at the end of the End Time, the Gospel will have been proclaimed literally to the ends of the earth. From one perspective we read in Acts 1:8 that Christ would make His apostles witnesses: first in Jerusalem, then through the province of Judea, then Samaria, and ultimately to the uttermost parts of the earth. This passage was fulfilled by the end of Acts 28 when Paul was found in Rome. Thus, the Gospel had gone to the ends of the *oikoumene* (“the inhabited earth”), at least the *oikoumene* then known. But since that season in history, our understanding of the inhabited earth has

overwhelmingly expanded and now literally covers every piece of geography on the planet, from the North Pole to the South Pole and all the continents in between. Matthew 24:14 reveals that the Gospel will be preached in all the *oikoumene*, “and then shall the end come.” Dear people, we believe we are at this time.

If the revelation of the Second Coming, at least in its fullness and details, began unfolding from the Scriptures between 1840 and 1860, then we need to be carefully viewing those prophecies that are identified with the End Time, or the end of the End Time. The Bible predicts that there will be a revival in the End Time, but it will not be a revival of the public, visible institutional church. What the public institutional church today calls an awakening, the Bible calls an apostasy. This global Christian apostasy will be the time when Christ is found outside of the Laodicean Church. He has been sickened by its lukewarmness to the point of vomiting this last church age out of his mouth (Rev. 3:15–20). Yet there will be a revival among the true remnant of the Lord. For the Bible predicts that the End-time remnant, at least in identification, will be mixed. This remnant is not in the context of wheat and tares; it is in the context of wise virgins and foolish virgins (Matthew 25).

This parable of the virgins is not so

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Published by the
Christian Purities Fellowship
The Witness Outreach of
Foundations Bible College

P. O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335-1166
800-849-8761

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much dedicated to the Bride of Christ as it is to those who will be the attendants of the Bride at the Rapture (the five wise virgins). Thank God for this parable that includes within the Rapture not simply the Bride but also the attendants to that Bride. The five *foolish* virgins imply to us that there will be those closely identified with the remnant who are not part of the remnant ready for that rapture. They may attend a remnant church, but they are not of the remnant in heart. Their life gives no indication of that remnant-living.

That voice “Behold, the bridegroom . . . ; go ye out to meet him” seems to be the “beginning of the end.” As previously expressed, all the prophecies in the Bible concerning the second coming of the Lord came forth with great detail to God’s men in the mid-1800s.

One of the truths revealed in this parable is that there is a revival, or perhaps another term, an *awakening* that takes place. There is an awakening of the wise virgins, and there is an awakening of the foolish. The foolish are identified with the wise; they are found with the wise; they worship with the wise; they will awake with the wise; and they will trim their lamps with the wise. The tow or the wick within the lamp is the material that the oil travels up through. The trimming of this wick suggests the detailed workings of grace in one’s

life to make the flame of Christ burn accurately and fully. Yes, there came a point that the foolish virgins realized their lamps (in the English) “are gone out” (25:8). But the Received Text (Greek) places the verb in the present tense, “our lamps are going out.” And they declared to the wise, “Give us of your oil.”

Sometimes people believe that as long as they are close to the true remnant, what the remnant has will automatically bleed over into their own lives. Children in a true Christian home (if it is a remnant Christian home) may believe that God will take them in the Rapture simply because their parents are walking with God and have the oil, or because they are in their parents’ home, go to church with them, bow their head and pray over the meals.

But the wise virgins made it clear: “We cannot give you of our oil, lest we will not have enough.” This indicates that although the voice had come, the echo of it continued. The Greek rendering reveals to us that when this loud voice came, it continued to reverberate. If the call came between 1840 and 1860, simultaneously with the birth of the Fundamentalist movement, we are still in the reverberation, but it is growing dimmer. We do not know how long it will be between the call and the actual coming. “We can’t give you any of our oil; you need

to go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." So they did. And it seems that either they did not get to those who sold, or they did buy and were on their way back. We are then told in this parable that they who were ready (the five wise virgins) went in with him: "they that were ready." The door was opened, and those wise virgins were where they should be. Being ready they went in with Him.

Readiness with Oil

There has been much debate over what is the oil in this parable. Sometimes one's theological background affects his view of the oil. Those who do not believe in the deeper life of a Christian give all kinds of commentary for the oil. But the oil in the Bible is a very strong symbol of the Holy Spirit. It is the oil for the light, for the lamps; it is for the anointing of individuals and for the anointing of things separated unto the Lord. Yes, it is for anointing. With the clarity of this shadow and type, then what is the oil in this particular parable? To keep true to the hermeneutical principle, the oil is a deepening of the relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is very clear in the parable that they all had oil in their lamps, but the wise virgins—and this is *why* they were called wise virgins—had additional oil in another vessel that they took with them. So while the oil was diminishing in the lamp, they were able to continue filling their

lamp; the foolish virgins whose lamps were going out had no additional oil with which to replenish theirs. Their lamps were beginning to flicker due to the absence of oil coming through the tow/wick; therefore, these five virgins requested oil from the wise.

Again, when does the Lord come? No man knoweth the day or the hour, and we must all be ready with lights burning. We must not place these five foolish virgins of Matthew 25 in the same context as those of Matthew 7, who cry out, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom the Lord stated, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (vv. 22, 23). The response in Matthew 25 is not that harsh. It is a response calling for a present-tense relationship. He does not call them workers of iniquity; they are not even given to bragging of what they have accomplished. The Bridegroom says simply, in the present tense, "I know you not." Whether there is a past tense when He knew them, or even a future tense when He would know them, we tend to lean to the belief that those five foolish virgins may represent the five orders of saints that appear in the Tribulation Period, who after their martyrdom are caught up to heaven (Rev. 6:9–11; 7:9–17; 14:1–5, 13; 18:4). But that is in the Tribulation Period. God forbid that we would say in our hearts, "I don't need this truth

in my life. I don't understand it, and therefore, since I don't understand it, I don't need it." But to whom much is given, much will be required.


However one views the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, four things are most clear: I must be pure (virgin); I must have oil (the fullness of the Spirit); I must be trimming my wick (the preparation of the heart and life for Christ); and I must be ready for His coming at any moment.

Conclusion

In the light of the End Time, we must have a greater consciousness that the apostasy has become global throughout every compartment in humanity. We must see that the Devil is increasing his forces of deception and aggression against the child of God, for he knows the time is drawing near when he will be able to bring forth his Man of Sin. The world is standing in readiness for such a man. But he also knows that the rapture of God's saints is prophetically soon to take place. He will do everything in his power to try to thwart this blessed event, even to the point of seeking to confront the event in his domain as the saints "meet the Lord in the air," for he is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). In our contemporary more individuals seem to be falling away from the truth than coming to the truth. The Devil is at his most mature season of existence; he has experimented with

humanity for over six thousand years. His greatest weapons from his diabolical arsenal of history are now being brought forth in the End Time to cause as many of God's professing people to leave the Lord and to enter the life of lukewarmness and worldliness. The powers of apostasy are ever raging, and the only antidote is an ever-fresh faith in the Lord.

This issue of *Straightway* takes us into the kingdom of darkness and how it works against God's saints with accusations day and night, both before the Throne of God and within the minds and hearts of His people. If the Devil cannot keep an individual from coming to Christ, he will do all he can to keep that "Christian life" at a minimum and without victory.

May the Lord help us in these days to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, and to ever keep ourselves in the love of God as we look to Him to keep us from falling in this falling away of the Laodicean Church Age. 

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The Power of Darkness: Its Beginning and Continued Influence

Dr. H. T. Spence

We now must give attention to the great power of the Devil set against God's children seeking to continue their lives with the Lord. The Devil casts thoughts in the mind of the believer to hinder any deepening of his desire for the things of God. To understand this wicked craft, we must go back in biblical history and reflect upon the beginning of these powers of darkness.

This historic journey reaches back to the vastness of the highly populated second heaven. The first heaven designated somewhat the canopy of our earth. The third heaven is where God resides. However, between these heavens is the second heaven, where all the spiritual principalities, powers, dominions, and thrones exist. From the perspective of our satellites and telescopes, we cannot help but utter in wonder, "This is vast!" In fact, science today believes that this universe is expanding and that we have not arrived at even a small approximation of how extensive this vastness is.

However, we must not think that this vast second heaven is void of population. The Bible tells us that when God created angels, He created a multitude without number and placed them all in this second heaven of the universe.

Additionally, the Bible reveals that among this multitude of angels, God created what seems to be His most powerful creation—Lucifer.

The Initial Thoughts of Lucifer

This created creature Lucifer came to believe that he should take the place of God. He believed he was beautiful enough and powerful enough to be God. He may have even thought (from an evolutionary perspective), "God only arrived just a few minutes before me." He convinced himself that he could take the place of God. Isaiah 14 carefully reveals his thoughts of deep pride and selfish ambition (vv. 13, 14).

Isaiah 14 is the only passage that reveals to us Lucifer's original name, meaning "bearer of light." God Himself named this angel. But Isaiah 14:12 cries out, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

These words (given by Isaiah against the king of Babylon) reveal where Lucifer's downfall began: "For thou hast said in thine heart" (14:13a). Lucifer's fall began not in open words against God but in the thoughts of his own heart! In the midst of the vast population of angels he declared, "I

will ascend into heaven," meaning he would ascend to the third heaven, God's heaven; he sought to ascend there permanently and make that third heaven his abode. Lucifer continues, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," speaking of the throne that God had appropriately delegated to this creature; this was not a throne Lucifer had created himself (Isa. 14:13a).

Lucifer's final three declarations are the height of his pride because they were his thoughts declaring to be like the Trinity. The first phrase "I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north" is similarly stated in Psalm 48 and Isaiah 2. This is a description of the coming Messiah, the Son! Lucifer's declaration was "I will be greater than the Son." We must acknowledge that Lucifer saw the Trinity in heaven, though not in all its fullness. Seeing its threefold distinction, his initial desire was to take the place of the Son. His second phrase declares, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds," speaking of his desire to be like the Holy Spirit. In his final phrase, he declares, "I will be like the most High," or like the Father. He was not content to be just one member; he thought and sought to be all three in himself.

What deep pride this creature had to dare contemplate that he could become greater than the Triune God! Yet we read the inspired word of verses 15–17:

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

These latter verses view the Devil at the end of time and how he will end in judgment from God. The world's population of history never dreamed this would happen to him: "Is this the one that has caused the earth to tremble, that made the kingdoms shake for fear? Is this the very same one?" But they will also declare, "That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof." This description is the product of what he did; and he opened not the house of his prisoners.

This passage tells where the powers of darkness all began. There was no Adam or Eve at this time. Pride was the original sin and the Devil was the original sinner of all creation. According to Ezekiel 28, he was the guardian and the covering of the throne of God. He was above all the cherubs, the most powerful angel created; he was the anointed one! He was the closest to the throne of God. Seeing and observing the Triune God in the third heaven in all His glory, Lucifer himself birthed such thoughts in his mind, influencing his heart and will. He then made the choice to rebel against God and fol-

lowed through in the execution of that choice. Yes, it went beyond thought; he actually rebelled!

Lucifer's First Prisoners

Who were Lucifer's first prisoners? The comprehensive chapter of Revelation 12 reveals that "his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven" (v. 4a). The tail in the Old Testament is that part of the body that typifies the false prophets, those who give powerful words with the hope and ability to deceive. Lucifer's tail, his talk, drew the third part of the stars (remember, he wanted to exalt his throne above the stars, the rest of the angels). His tail drew a third part of the angels of the second heaven. He then cast these fallen angels to the earth where the Bible declares, "the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (v. 4b). Here, the Bible speaks of him as a *dragon*. Who is this dragon?

Revelation 12:9 continues by stating, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." This additional name *Satan* means "adversary." But to whom is he an adversary? When God gave the angels a will, Lucifer and one-third of the angels made a choice with that will, and they executed that choice by rebelling against God. It was at that moment that Lucifer became Satan (Gr., *Satanas*), the one lying in wait to

destroy God—the adversary of God. This Satan is additionally called the *Devil* (Gr., *Diabolos*) or "the accuser." Although the Bible does not reveal Lucifer's words to God, we do know about his will against God and his subsequent fall. Did he go to God? Did he attack God to his face? Did he confront God in His power as God? What did he accuse God of?

God did not create the Devil or Satan; God created Lucifer. He created a perfect angelic world, a perfect angelic population. But when this one angel rose against God, he also convinced one-third of the angelic population to join him in the rebellion. For this reason, New Testament demons are called *devils*; the demons that followed the Devil became a devil and a satan. These fallen angelic beings continue to hate and accuse not only God but also His people throughout history. God did not create evil. Evil came out of the will of the Devil, Lucifer, who became *Satanas* and *Diabolos*.

Satan's Influence at the Beginning

At the fall of Satan and his demons, God confined some of these demons to *Tartarus* (a place for fallen spirits or demons, similar to *Hades*, a place for human spirits), where they are in chains until the final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Other demons were bound in geographies of the universe until the appointed day of the Tribulation Period, at which time they will be

released upon the earth as part of the judgment upon men (e.g., Rev. 9:14). And yet, other demons including Satan were permitted to roam the heavens. After the earth's creation and fall of man, Satan and his demons gained an influence upon humanity.

We must be very careful how we introduce the Garden of Eden. Everything God made was perfect; and everything that was on the earth was perfect and good and holy and righteous. But somehow, with the power that God created this angel to have, he was able to manipulate and influence a creature that God made—a serpent, called *nachash*. Although Satan was not on the planet, he was able to influence this *nachash* to communicate with Eve. Although Satan was not yet with man, he found an open door to influence him. Eve yielded to the words of the dragon through the serpent, and then Eve convinced her husband to yield. The fall of man then brought mankind into the propensity of sin. Although Adam is the original sinner on the planet Earth, the original sinner of the universe is the Devil. The door for the Devil to come into the earth and influence the world of mankind was opened by Adam and Eve.

A relationship between Satan and mankind would now be formed in a variety of contexts. In Ephesians 2:2, he is called “the prince of the power of the air.” This air references the first

and second heavens; he has become a prince in these regions. He has become a high influential ruler of the air. He is also called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) or the god of this “age.” How did he become the god?

The Devil is very rarely mentioned in the Old Testament. He is most prominently mentioned in the first two chapters of Job. It is the New Testament that begins to reveal much more about the Devil. In Job 1:7 the Lord said unto Satan, “Whence comest thou?” “Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth.” This passage indicates that the Devil is not limited to the air or the second heaven. This verse is telling us, “I have been going to and fro in the earth, and specifically, walking up and down in it.” This reveals where he is; this is almost his home.

Again, in Job 2:2, “And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” Satan was one of all the angels that was required to make an appearance before the Lord and give an account of his doings (not that God needs the information, but they needed to be accountable to Him). Having to come before God and give an account of all that he does is no doubt demeaning and humiliating to the Devil. The Lord once again brings

up Job's name, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" The Lord questioned the Devil: "Well, in your comings and goings, and carefully observing humanity, have you 'considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him [in chap. 1], to destroy him [and very importantly] without cause'" (2:3). From this context it is evident Satan was observing Job; he observes every man. He knows every man, woman, boy, and girl. From his observations Satan attacked the motive of Job: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (2:4, 5). Yes, these conversations take place at the throne of God.

The Work and Influence of the Devil

First Peter 5:8 describes the Devil going to and fro with a specific motive:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Peter warns his audience that they must keep awake, and on watch, for

the adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, is walking about, up and down in the earth, to and fro. His specific motive is to devour or destroy all whom he can. The Devil does not sleep; he does not become apathetic; he does not take vacations. Destruction is his satanic occupation. If he travels at least at the speed of light, he can encircle this planet seven times in one second. His individual work does not include all the spies of the demonic forces that he uses to keep him updated on God's people.

In Ephesians 6:12, we have the revelation that we wrestle not (we do not have hand-to-hand combat against flesh and blood), but we do wrestle (at times we are very close) against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, or in the heavenlies. Yes, the Devil is right here, almost face to face in combat with us every day.

First John 5:19 declares that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness, or the wicked one. Everything about this world—its media, its commercialization, its politics, its religion—everything lies in the wicked one. In 2 Corinthians 4:3, we read the brief words, "But if our gospel be hid...." This is a far-reaching statement—if there is anyone on the planet, any human being of any given generation that does not see the Gospel, it is

because it is hidden to them who are lost. We will not be able to accuse God, “Well, You didn’t get the Gospel to those people in Africa.” No, this passage is very clear here: “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”

But is this all Paul has to say? No, he continues in verse 4, “In whom the god of this world [the Devil] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” How do these people continue not believing? It is because of the Devil! How does he do this? He has a power; he has a wonder, a capability of blinding minds, blinding the way people think. He has “blinded the minds of them which believe not,” and his motive for doing so is “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” This blinding is his concentrated duty to keep as many as possible from believing.

So at the beginning, there was a Devil who fell from a perfect state; he was not part of this world, yet he took hold of a *nachash*, “a shining one, a brilliant one,” and he used that creature as an instrument of influence to bring about the fall of our parents Adam and Eve. At that event man opened the door for Satan to now enter the planet Earth from which he previously had been sealed out. In Revelation 20, we find that when Satan is cast into a bottomless pit right at the beginning of the thousand years

(the Millennium), it is evident that this will not be sufficient. Revelation 20:3 reveals, “And [an angel] cast him [the Devil] into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.” Why the need of a seal upon the Devil in this bottomless pit? “That he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.” After the thousand years, he will bring a powerful deception. Nevertheless, during these thousand years God seals the pit from any influence he could project upon the planet Earth.

At our present time in history, we have the Devil in the earth. He has become the god of this world. Within this context the Devil has total control of influence on this earth, although we know that God is sovereign above it all! The Bible reveals that Satan is hiding the truth of the Gospel to those who do not believe.

Along with this truth, we must acknowledge that there is the human ingredient—the truth that man does not need the Devil to sin. Every man, woman, boy, and girl are born with the sin nature. They will sin because this is their nature; they were born with this propensity.

Galatians 5:19 states that the works of the flesh are manifested in various ways: “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envy-

ings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." We are told that those who "do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21). Nestled within this listing are two words: *idolatry* and *witchcraft*. Although man does not need the Devil in the list of the other sins, for the sins of idolatry and witchcraft he will need the assistance of the Devil. Therefore, there is a point in the sinning of certain sins, if man wants to go deeper in those sins, the Devil must empower him.

In Ephesians 2:1, 2, Paul declares, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past [these redeemed, these saved Christians, in the past] ye walked according to the course [*aion*; you walked according to the age] of this world [system], according to the prince of the power of the air." What is noted here by the apostle Paul is not simply that they walked according to their present contemporary, its mood, its spirit, its ambitions, its desires; but they walked according to the prince of the power of the air. They were influenced by the Devil. This reveals to us that every sinner to some degree is influenced by the Devil. For Paul reveals, "the spirit that now worketh ["energizes"] in the children of disobedience." Disobedience is the critical sin mentioned here; this sin is empowered by the Devil. These verses do not mean that I cannot disobey without the Devil's help, but there are certain

sins for which the Devil is always present—disobedience is one of those sins. Paul reveals in 2 Timothy 3:2 that one of the sins that will rise in prominence in the End Time will be disobedience to parents. Such children, both old and young, may be bold in their expression of disobedience, but behind them and unbeknown to them is the master disobedient one, the Devil.

Another sin that the Devil enters into with man is found in John 8:44:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

The Devil is the originator and progenitor of lying. Thus far in our observation we have come to two sins where man in sinning enters the realm of the spirit, the realm of Satan—disobedience and lying. Yes, there are works of the flesh in Galatians 5, but when one enters disobedience and lying, he enters into a work in the spirit realm where the Devil is actively assisting, whether one is a child or an adult. The End Time certainly is filled with the sins of the flesh, but one of the master sins of our American society is lying—fake news; fake history; bold, raw, aggressive lies. Every little lie is contributing as tributaries to a coming bold, global Lie. If only we would

realize that if we tell a lie, the Devil is right there enabling, empowering that lie. Lying is a specific sin upon which he feeds. In certain sins the Devil wants as many offspring as he can sire!

The prophet Samuel confronted King Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22, 23 with these words:

Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion [disobedience] is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness [obstinacy] is as iniquity and idolatry.

The rawness of the original Hebrew is “For rebellion (without the italics), the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness (without the italics), iniquity and idolatry.” How does idolatry come into this? It is the projection of the deification of self over God. The prophet Samuel here is not declaring that rebellion is like witchcraft or that stubbornness is like the sin of iniquity and idolatry. We must read it without the italicized words to mean that rebellion is the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is iniquity and idolatry.

There are many sins the Devil cannot sin. He does not have a body to sin fleshly sins. He can empower; he can give thoughts to the mind to commit fornication, to live immorally, to com-

mit incest, but he cannot personally commit these sins. He may “possess” a person’s body and empower it to commit fornication, but does he personally gain pleasure from that possession even though the body is not his? Idolatry and witchcraft become the final frontier of the sins of the flesh, needing the presence of the Devil (or demons) in order to commit such sins. One will have to step into another realm beyond the flesh for this work of the flesh to be enacted.

The Devil’s Confrontation with Jesus Christ

In Matthew 4, the Devil confronted Jesus with the wilderness temptations. Matthew presents the temptation of Christ from the natural sequence, whereas Luke 4 gives its spiritual approach. In the second temptation found in Luke (the third sequential temptation of Matthew), it is stated, “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Luke 4:5). The word for the *world* here is *oikoumene*. The Devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the *inhabited world* supernaturally, in a moment of time. This perspective included Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greco-Macedonia, and Rome. Was the Antichrist kingdom part of what he showed Jesus?

The Devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the *oikoumene* in a moment

of time. “And the devil said unto him, All this power [this authority of these kingdoms] will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me” (Luke 4:6). How were these kingdoms delivered unto the Devil? Did God deliver them? No. Only men seeking greater power gave their kingdoms unto the Devil. Men through their gods (part of the idolatry of Satan) delivered their kingdoms to the Devil. They did so with the hope that he would empower them to conquer and control others. “If you empower me to gain the world, the whole world, I’ll worship you, I will give you my soul, I will do anything that you demand of me.” Yes, the kingdoms have been delivered unto Satan by man. He is so intricately involved in this world’s history now. In verse 6 we read, “And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will [Gr., *thelema*, “wish”; whatever is the wish of my heart as to who takes total control of these kingdoms] I give it [I am the one who will make the choice; I am the one who will make the deliverance].” He was telling the Lord, “I have the power, I have the authority to give this to you.” For this power what was needed? Verse 7 reveals how Satan got all the kingdoms: “If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” He had taken control because of man’s worship unto him. But how far does this go?

The Devil’s Will, God’s Will, and My Will

We now carefully enter another passage of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:23–26, Paul reveals an important truth to Timothy:

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive [physically or with words in anger or hostility]; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves [they are actually against themselves, but they do not know it]; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth [one must acknowledge the truth for repentance]; And that they may recover themselves [that they may be brought] out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

This verb *taken captive* is in the perfect passive, indicating there was an initial crisis of taking (or an initial falling into the trap), and then there was a continuation in the present tense (the perfect tense is the combination of the crisis and the present tenses). The Devil has kept them bound as a captive prisoner. And to what? They are taken captive by him, the Devil, at his will (*thelema*, his “wish-will”). The Devil’s will versus God’s will—which will control my life? The true child of God cries (as his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ), “Nevertheless, not my will,

but thine, be done.” This is the yoke of Christ. But we must remember that the Devil has his will, and he has captured many an individual to his will.

“I’ll do anything; if only you will give me this kingdom....” What covenant did Hitler enter with the Devil to gain control of what he believed ultimately would be the world? This goes beyond a Hitler, a Putin, or a Nancy Pelosi. We speak of individuals we know, relatives and friends, sons and daughters, who have been taken captive by the Devil’s will. This proves that the Devil has a power in his will, though limited. God has unlimited power in His will; He can choose and execute that choice, and nothing is impossible with God. To a certain degree, in God’s sovereign will He permits the Devil’s will to resolve in some individuals’ lives. And once the will of an individual opens to him, the Devil’s powers of control and influence can take over.

Dear reader, this is why disobedience and lying are part of the Devil’s active will for one’s life: “I want you to be disobedient; I want you to lie in this matter.” The will of an individual includes a choice, a decision. One can make a decision and retreat from fulfilling the choice, or one can make a decision and follow through and execute that decision or choice. Have thoughts ever entered our minds about something, “Don’t say that, don’t do that,” and yet we followed through and

said it or committed the act. We did it. We lied. We disobeyed. It was an empowering for the moment. We got caught in the snare. But now are we going to repent of that disobedience? Are we going to repent of that lying? Or are we going to refuse to repent? Will the Devil continue to feed the mind with thoughts such as, “You don’t have to repent of this; after all, you had a right to do what you did; you had a right to rebel; you had a right to be defiant.” Once this conclusion resolves in an individual, there will be no self-control. He is now in the Devil’s will. The individual may be quiet; he may start smiling, but the Devil will bring another opportunity (or God will bring it up), and the sin will come out again. However, the next time will be deeper than the previous time.

Every time we yield to the Devil, his power and control of our lives deepens. Every time I yield to God’s will, His power deepens in its control of my life. How far will this go? In 2 Timothy 2:26, what is this captivity? What is this binding? What is this imprisonment? How far does it go? In Matthew 17:14, we read of a father who desired for the Lord to help his son, to have mercy on him. The Greek word for son here is *huios*, implying a full-grown son. But in the narrative of Luke 9:42, the word is *paida*, “and the child was cured from that very hour.” Apparently, this son was about twelve to fourteen years old, a *paida*, not a

paidion. Can the Devil lay hold of a young child? How young can one be?

God has providential forces protecting children around the world. One does not come into the world sinning, actively drinking, smoking, or being an atheist. God's providence provides mercy as one grows into an awareness of these sins. But lying and disobedience are innate; they come naturally. Again, the Devil empowers in a child as he grows older the two particular sins of disobedience and lying. This is why these sins must be broken early. In the passage in Matthew 17, the father declared to the Lord, "And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me" (17:16, 17). "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief" (17:19, 20a). They brought the son to Jesus and He rebuked the Devil or demon, and the demon departed out of the child.

The dilemma in this passage is what is the minimum age whereby a child may be demon-possessed? Several concerns must be considered. The first concern is the willfulness of a will to yield to these powers. The child may not know it is the Devil, but he is yielding to a power to do

wrong, a power to react, or a power to go against. This yielding becomes the door to open more and more to demonic activity. There comes a point in the fulfilling of a desire that one will need the power of the Devil to go onward in the sin. In our day and time (and it may have been for this dear child), there is an increasing passivity of the will. This is why we should fear apathy. When apathy begins to take hold of our mind, the tendency is to just let that mind wander. We then yield to thinking about anything that comes into the mind, or with our will we are not making choices and decisions of determination not to do certain things; we just go ahead and yield and yield and yield, and do and do.

The Scripture reveals that Christ delivered Mary Magdalene from seven demons (Mark 16:9). How did these demons enter her? Was she a vulnerable, weak woman? Did each demon that came into her life weaken her more and more until she had no will to overcome? It seems that Christ out of great mercy had to deliver her from these demons. Some people live such passive lives. They will not fight against certain forces that send suggestions to the mind or implications to the heart. Over time, they begin to yield to these forces, gradually becoming progressively weaker and eventually overtaken by these deep powers.

Conclusion

Dear reader, the Devil is alive and working throughout this planet Earth. His influence is prominent in many lives. This is the way the world is today. This is a reason very few are coming to the Lord now; moreover, sad to say, more individuals are leaving the Lord than truly coming to the Lord. We are witnessing the great activity of the Devil in the End Time. Some of these forces are going to be so powerful that any deliverance will not be easy. As the Lord told His disciples privately when they asked, "Why could not we cast them out?" He replied, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21).

Nevertheless, Isaiah 61:1 declares the following concerning Christ:

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.

Thank God, there is a hope, there is a power, and there is an anointed Saviour Who can proclaim liberty to these captives!

According to Isaiah 14:17, Satan will not open the house of his prisoners. We must turn to the great Son of God to bring about this deliverance.

Men today are sinning sins to such a depth that they have opened the door of their will, mind, and heart for the Devil to empower them. It may be that in the past our mind was controlled by the Devil as we allowed our thoughts to wander. We became passive; we yielded to passivity. Our state of mind and heart got deeper and deeper; apathy and indifference brought us down to such darkness that we could not escape. More and more professing Christians have entered this *apathy-captivity*, this *apathy-imprisonment*. They may say, "I have tried, but I can't get out of it!" How hypocritical of our contemporary to denounce the history of slavery while promoting slavery to sin and the Devil.

As we grow older and physically decline, we must be careful about allowing thoughts that are not good to enter the mind. Sometimes such thoughts are prompted by the drugs that are declared as needed for our physical or mental condition. But we must be careful that the Devil does not take advantage of the mind through these drugs. We must pray to the end, "God, give me the Spirit of love, power, and a sound mind so that I will not end up cursing those who take care of me, and I will not end up cursing the pastor, and I will not end up cursing those who have been my friends for years."

The Devil's last stand will be in the End Time. To the last minute of our

lives, God's saints will be fighting spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. We tend to think that all God's saints will be victorious at the end. In the 1700s, it was often stated, "How goodly the Methodists die." But these Methodists were not living in the apostate days that we find ourselves called to live. Some of God's people may be on their deathbed, crying out, "O God, help me," as the Devil throws thoughts into the mind to obstruct their faith.

May God help in this late hour when the powers of evil and darkness are swirling around us like a whirlwind. May we know His victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil. May our Saviour deliver the captives, the prisoners that are bound. May we

remember the words of Peter as he preached to the house of Cornelius:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

We may wonder at times, "O God, where did that thought come from?" Help us to keenly know our adversary, so that he will not be able to take advantage of us. May God help our children and deliver them from the moods and spirit of our day of rebellion.

May the Holy Spirit ready us and keep us readied to enter that door of the rapture when it is opened. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. **[S]**

Foundations Calendar

**Summer Months
2019**

**Foundations Day
June 2**

**Men's Prayer Conference
June 6–8**

**Marriage Conference
July 27**

**Ladies' Prayer Fellowship
August 9, 10**

The Power of Darkness: Its Presence in the End Time

Dr. H. T. Spence

When God created all the angelic host, He certainly knew that one of them would rebel against Him. When the seventy came back rejoicing that even the devils were subject unto them, Jesus, the Son of God, responded to His disciples, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). These words are a revealed insight that nothing Lucifer thought or did *before* his fall from heaven surprised God. We have carefully observed the verses in Isaiah 14 of the rebellious thoughts within his heart. We have also observed in Revelation 12 how his communications with other angels convinced one-third to rebel with him against God. Did Lucifer finally go before God and attack Him, gainsay Him, and defy Him at the height of his rebellion? How long did all of this take in the process of angelic time? What was the sequence of events: initial thoughts against God privately within his heart; then speaking with the angels in falsity and lies to convince them to cast in their lot with him; and finally, a confrontation with God?

Luke 10:18 unveils the Son's personal observation of these successive events when He was in heaven. He begins with the declaration, "I beheld Satan. . . ." This verb *beheld* is in the imperfect tense, combining the pres-

ent tense that leads up to an aorist (or crisis) tense. In heaven, the Son beheld in detail the *process* taking place with Lucifer. He saw the fall of this mighty one coming, the continuation of the unfolding of it, until Lucifer's "fall" came (the aorist tense). There is always a process of actions leading up to any fall. We may wonder why God even created the angelic hosts if He knew this would happen. But perhaps we would equally wonder why God created the human race, foreknowing there would be a fall and all the consequences that would result, even reaching to this very time in history.

My dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, now and then made the statement that when he gets to heaven, he is going to thank God for the Devil. I remember the first time I heard him make that statement. I did not doubt or question it but simply wondered about it. He went on to explain that unless the Devil had done all that he did to confront us day by day, we probably would not have given our life to the intensity of prayer that should have been given. The Devil drove us to God!

And when we get to heaven, will God finally reveal why He created the angelic hosts? We know, according

to Scripture, that it was for His glory and praise and that they were to be ministering spirits unto Himself and to God's people. Yet He knew what would come from this creation—both the coming into existence of evil and the fall of one-third of those angels. God also knew that basically the history of man would be destroyed; and, it would only be when His Son, the Christ, the perfect Man comes to earth a second time and sets up His kingdom, that the history of man will be resolved well.

But what is to be done with all the thousands of years that fallen man has lived and brought about a system against God, to say nothing of the individual lives of people lost and in ruin? We must believe that God, in His infinite wisdom, knowing all things, “doeth all things well.” Though His creation will see the fall of angels and man, including the wrath of the Devil, all this one day will turn out to praise Him.

The Devil's Influence in the Old Testament

But what am I to do with this Devil? How am I to respond to his evil treachery and temptations? How am I to face this *Satanas* (this Adversary) and this *Diabolos* (this Slanderer) against God and His people? We must remember that when Lucifer's rebellion took place in heaven, mankind had not been created. But since God created humanity, the Devil has brought his

adversarial and slanderous powers to the earth; he ever lies in wait to destroy God's people. And yet, above it all and in every minute detail, God victoriously stands in His sovereignty. There is not one thing the Devil does that is not in God's consciousness. Yea, there is not one thing instigated by Satan that will not fall out ultimately to the plan of God.

As referenced earlier, the title *Satan* is mentioned only a few times in the Old Testament. Twelve of these times occur in the first book written in the Bible, the Book of Job, and only in the first two chapters. Not even Job ever brings up the name of Satan. His thoughts are not towards this great adversary of both God and His people. It is evident that Job is not aware that Satan is behind at least a part of what he had been experiencing. It never entered his mind.

Satan is also mentioned in 2 Samuel 24 as well as in 1 Chronicles 21 from Ezra's perspective of the same event. Note 2 Samuel 24:1:

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

In this context the emphasis is upon the Lord's anger against Israel, not so much against David. As the chapter unfolds, the ultimate judgment was against Israel in the light of the tens of thousands that died by the sword

of the angel of the LORD. But then in 1 Chronicles 21:1, Ezra (centuries later) gives us an insight we would not have even contemplated: “Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” How do we harmonize these passages of Scripture? In 2 Samuel 24:1, “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them.”

How did the Lord choose to move David against Israel? The Lord *permitted* Satan to provoke David; Satan provoked David by casting thoughts into his mind to number Israel. Such a working by God is very rare in the Bible, but at times He uses the Devil in this way. God is not the author of evil, and God is not the author of sin; however, He will use evil. Remember, God did not create Satan. God created Lucifer; Satan was self-born. Nevertheless, Satan is ever under God’s hand.

Lo, at the end of history perhaps we will look back and see God’s hand was behind everything that Satan thought he himself had accomplished. We know that Satan cannot do one thing against us. He cannot tempt us, nor can he perform any evil deed against us—not one thing—unless God gives permission! So, everything in my life is ultimately in the hands of God, although He at times may permit the Devil to do certain things.

The name *Satan* is mentioned as well

by David in Psalm 109:6. In this prayer against his earthly adversary, David asks the Lord to allow a wicked man to be set up over him and “let Satan stand at his right hand” as a curse against his enemy.

Near the end of the Old Testament, we read of Satan once again. After the first return of the Jews to Jerusalem (536 BC) and the completion of the foundation of the temple, there were fifteen years of spiritual levity, mediocrity, apathy, and indifference among the remnant. They did not pursue the completion of the temple. During these years, the Devil manifested himself and took advantage of the Jews’ failures (Zechariah 3). He fed their apathy and spiritual indifference. Note Zechariah 3:1:

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD [the preincarnate Christ], and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

The angel of the LORD was there to plead for this remnant while Satan the Devil was there to resist any positive thing that could be done for them. In Zechariah 3:2 we read, “And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan.” As Satan strongly attacked the Jewish remnant, he was declaring to God, “You do not have a right to do anything for this remnant because of the way they have been living.”

The LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua [the high priest at this time] was clothed with filthy garments (3:2, 3).

Joshua the high priest was a commentary of the people—they were filthy. They had fallen back into sin, and the one that represented the people, the high priest, was clothed in filthy garments while standing before the angel—this preincarnate Christ.

And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him [angels?], saying [this is the angel crying out], Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment (3:4).

This account was during the time when Zechariah and Haggai were preaching, and a precious revival came to the remnant as the Spirit of the Lord stirred them up. Indeed, these filthy garments were changed! And even the young prophet Zechariah, in seeing this, cried out, “Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by” (3:5). But then we read, “And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua.” Yes, the garments had been changed. A redemptive work had been done. This

was a work of revival that came to the remnant.

But then the angel of the LORD gives a protestation postscript to this work:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by (3:7).

The revival was coming, and now the exhortation, “You must maintain what God has done.”

This context is the last time Satan is mentioned in the Old Testament. If we look for the word *devil* in the Old Testament, we will only find it in the plural. The plural use of devils is always in the context of demons or evil spirits, rather than a specific reference to Satan himself.

Satan’s Seasons of Intense Concentration in History

The Scriptures unfold in its history the evidence that Satan has had several seasons of intensity in his attack against God’s people. According to Revelation 12:10, Satan is constantly before God accusing the brethren “day and night.” He is the slanderer and the accuser of God’s true people. But there seems to be seven unique, intense seasons when the Devil has powerfully manifested himself in history.

The first season was at the fall of Lucifer. At this season there was a concentration of this *diabolos* spirit and power. Although we may speculate about the Devil's involvement in Genesis 6, it must be kept in mind that the emphasis of Genesis 6 is the proliferation of the manifestation of the *flesh*, the sin of man. The word *flesh* is the important word in this chapter presented in four contexts addressing its iniquity, and the powers of fornication; this chapter reveals the full abandonment of man to fleshly sins.

The second season of satanic activity seems to be after the Flood and the crucial historical event of the Tower of Babel. Was there diabolical assistance in this empire building? In Genesis 10, which unfolds the history that came out of the early part of Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel, we read of Nimrod and his father Cush. Cush is viewed by the prophets as "Bel," the father of idolatry. There was no idolatry before the Flood; there was simply the deep exploration of sin within man and its outpouring of evil in society. It is evident in Genesis 11:1 that Cush and his son Nimrod (meaning "let us rebel," or "let us do Bel over again") became mighty men, men of renown who led the rebellion against Noah and his family. Genesis 10:9 states that Nimrod (Sargon I in secular history) "was a mighty hunter before the LORD." Perhaps Micah 7:2 illustrates this more clearly:

The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

Nimrod was a hunter of godly men to their destruction. Yes, the days of the Tower of Babel were days when man's desires were intensified by the Devil.

The third season of the Devil's concentrated time of intense influence seems to have been during the days of Moses. Egypt was an empire of not only earthly power but also deep occult power. Amazingly, most of the miracles of Moses and Aaron were imitated by the priests of Pharaoh without trick photography or the illusions of magic. These priests' actions were the manifesting powers of the Devil. The Bible reveals to us particularly two names of men who confronted Moses and Aaron. Although these names are not given in the Book of Exodus, they are revealed in 2 Timothy 3 by the apostle Paul. These two names seem to have been common knowledge down throughout Jewish history. Paul revealed their names as Jannes and Jambres.

Jannes and Jambres were men of renown in Egypt, demonic men who were able to bring forth most of the miracles that Moses did. At the conclusion of the wilderness wanderings, Moses delivered the warnings concerning the powers of the occult that the

children of Israel would have to face in Canaan. Note Moses' listing:

*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times [astrology], or an enchanter [whisper, the word **nachash** serpent], or a witch [a woman who practices sorcery], Or a charmer [to fascinate through dark powers], or a consulter with familiar spirits [or control spirits], or a wizard [one who knows demonic wisdom], or a necromancer [to enquire of the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee (Deut. 18:10–12).*

The children of Israel left Egypt and these powers, but they were to enter a country of nations pervaded with the occult, the hidden powers of the Devil.

The fourth season of concentrated powers of the Devil was in the days of Elijah and Elisha. This season was especially known in the Northern Kingdom, where these powers were identified with the false god Baal and the prophets of Baal, as well as Jezebel (who had come into the North marrying Ahab through an alliance with the Phoenicians). This woman was a great medium in the occult religion of Baal. Elijah and Elisha faced the powers of the Devil joining forces with evil men and women in an endeavor to destroy

the concept of the true and living God.

The fifth season of Satan's concentrated influence is found in the days of Daniel. This young man was thrown into the dark powers of Babylon by the providence of God. Daniel 10 reveals that this was a season of powerful conflicts in the heavenlies. This had never been read about before in Scripture. Was this the first time such a battle took place? Or was it only in the days of Daniel, the prophet to the Gentiles, that God revealed these conflicts? Some things must be kept in mind when we read Daniel 10. If Belshazzar had stayed in power (Daniel 5), the Jews, at least from the natural, would have never been able to return to Jerusalem. This man hated and despised the Jews. He mocked the Jews. He mocked the God of the Jews. In one night the Lord quickly altered the flow of history by ending his reign and establishing another empire (the Medes and Persians) within twenty-four hours.

Darius led the Medes and became a dear friend to Daniel (Daniel 6). The whole mood, the whole spirit of the kings regarding the Jews radically changed, literally overnight. Two years later, Cyrus arose and gave the decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem. This would have never happened if God had not overthrown the Babylonian Empire.

It is revealed in Daniel 10 that there

was a battle taking place in the heavens to stop Cyrus, to thwart the command to permit the Jews to return to their city and to build a temple to their God. But it is evident that the one called the prince of Persia in Daniel 10 was actually the Devil. Daniel had prayed (10:1) in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, which was at the end of the seventy years. The prayer the prophet prayed had a delay of answer covering twenty-one days. It is evident Daniel's prayer was not thwarted, but when God sent Gabriel from heaven to bring the answer back to Daniel, the prince of Persia, Satan, confronted him with his horde of demons and began to fight against Gabriel. God sent Michael to take up the battle against the Devil; this battle took place in the heavens, while Gabriel appeared to Daniel to give him the answer. The victory was a great miracle.

For twenty-one days the answer was delayed. It was during that time that Cyrus was in the throes of deciding whether to release the Jews back to Jerusalem. Would they go back? Would prophecy be thwarted? Would it come to pass? It was a most critical time in the history of the nation of Israel, and it is evident that Michael won the battle against the prince of Persia, the Devil himself (though Satan is not mentioned by name, but only as the adversary). We find at the end of 2 Chronicles and the beginning of the first chapter of Ezra, that Cyrus gave

the decree for them to return and to build the temple. It was a crucial hour when the invisible forces endeavored to stop the history of man.

A postscript to Satan's influence is found in Zechariah 3, which was fifteen years after the foundation of the temple had been laid. Satan stood against the Jews to stop the building of the Second Temple. If he could not stop the return earlier by Cyrus, Satan would try to destroy the remnant's relationship with God once they returned to Jerusalem.

The sixth concentrated season of demonic activity was during the time of Christ's first coming and during the time of the Book of Acts. The four Gospels reveal to us Christ's confrontation with demonic forces and His personal confrontation with the Devil. We then read in the Book of Acts of the seven confrontations of God's men with the Devil and demons. In contrast, we additionally read of seven infillings of the Spirit among God's men. It must be clearly observed that these were not the only times that demonic forces were confronted in the Book of Acts, nor were the seven infillings of the Holy Spirit the only outpourings during those years. Yet these were the events chosen to be placed in the book.

The Final Concentrated Season of Demonic Power

We come to the final concentrated time of demonic power mentioned in

the Scriptures. It will take place in the End Time. This will also include the season that leads into the Tribulation Period and the Tribulation Period itself. This is where we are today. How do God's saints deal with these invisible powers? It is important that we consider this.

Second Timothy 3 unfolds the powers of Satan in the Visible Church in the End Time: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," very difficult times. In Matthew 8:28, we read of this same Greek word but translated "exceeding fierce," truly a demonic season in the End Time. The last Church Age will witness a global apostasy empowered by the Devil; it will be the worst hour of corrupting the Name of the Lord. These perilous times will not be so much for the increase of persecution against the Church but the corruption of evil that will pervade men who will be predominant in the controlling powers of the End-time institutional church. Yes, perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked. This wickedness of sin will be empowered by the Devil. Within the list of 2 Timothy 3 are the characteristics that will be the commentary of the End-time Church. Although there is the list of fleshly sins in Romans 1, Second Timothy gives the list of apostate sins that will mark the public testimony of End-time Christianity. Truly men shall be lovers of themselves with no consciousness

of the needs of others. If they do assist others, it will be with the motive of the promotion of themselves. They are given to covetousness, being lovers of money,

boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers [slanderers, ever striving to ruin the character of others], incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good [not lovers of good men], traitors, heady [headstrong, rash, inconsiderate], highminded [frivolously aspiring, those who are full of themselves and empty of all good], lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

They will "have a form of godliness," attending church while destitute of the life of God in their souls. They will even deny that such a life or spiritual power of godliness exists.

Paul exhorts, "From such turn away." Not only do not imitate them but have no kind of fellowship with them. They are dangerous and damnable in their influence. "For of this sort are they." Paul refers to false teachers and their insinuating manners, practicing upon weak women who, observing in these false teachers and preachers a semblance of piety, will accept them and entertain them with great eagerness, and at last become partakers with them in their ungodliness and apostate heart and manner. Such women (like Eve with the serpent) will ever be

learning from their false teachers, “and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” This is because their teaching never leads to the truth.

It is in this context that we are told of Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses. This acknowledgment takes us back to Exodus 7 when these demonically possessed men religiously stood against Moses. This is what it will be in the End Time: men of renown, men of corrupt minds. Such men in the End-time Neo-Christianity will be reprobate concerning the faith. Sad to say, the last Church Age not only will cast Christ out of the Church but also will be energized by the Devil himself. Though the “gates of hell” (of death) will never take the “true” church of Christ, those gates will prevail over the public, global Christianity of the End Time. We are witnessing these demonic powers within the bold “many,” as Jesus predicted would come in His name in the end (Matthew 24).

The perilous times of the End-time institutional church will also be influenced by the coming demonic forces increasing in world governments, and the empowering of the natural evil and sin of men. We read of such dark powers taking over the earth in the Book of Revelation, preparing the way for the coming of both the Antichrist, the beast out of the sea, and the False Prophet, the beast out of the earth.

Conclusion

John the Beloved, writing after the death of the apostles Paul and Peter, warned us in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, believe not every spirit.” John was not speaking of personal spirits, but of demonic spirits, including the spirit of the Devil. This phrase truly indicates that such spirits will be prevalent in the End Time among God’s people. It is that mixture of the Tares and Wheat, at times so close that the deception could be “religious” and even “Christian.” Therefore, we are to try the spirits behind what we see and hear; we are to test to see whether they be of God. The apostle gives us the insightful reason for the imperativeness of such testing—because “many false prophets are gone out into the world.” These End-time days reveal that the false prophets of our times will be empowered by “spirits.”

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:2, 3).

Now in this context he tells us this:

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them [these false prophets; these spirits empowering these false prophets: you have overcome them. Why did you overcome them?]: be-

cause greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (4:4).

Who is the “he” that is within us? The first is found in 1 John 2:18–20,

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They [the many antichrists] went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

This is in the context that they went out from us, but they were not of us; for they were against the Christ of Scripture and the Christ we preach and live. Yet, how will we discern that those who left us were not of the truth? John then declares, “But ye have an unction [Gr., *charisma*] from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

Now, the Holy One is Christ Himself. John then warns and exhorts in 2:26, 27, “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing [the same word *charisma* translated in verse 20 as “unction”] which ye have received of him abideth in you.” What is this anointing which we have received of him? This is the Holy Spirit. In 2:20, it is the unction coming from the Holy One, the Lord Jesus; in 2:27, it is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us with discernment those who are *anti* to Christ. It is

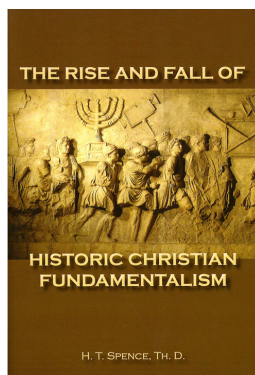
a double *charisma*, both the Christ and the Holy Spirit. So, greater is He—the Christ; and greater is He—the Holy Spirit. Greater is He—the Holy Spirit manifesting the presence of Christ in the life in order to discern these false prophets. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

We do not want to undermine the one that is in the world, that one being the Devil; but in this context it is any false prophet that comes. We know the Devil is at his most artful hour of history in mature deception: that if it were possible in the End Time, the very elect would be deceived. So we will need someone within us manifesting, witnessing, through God’s Word, the truth of that which we see without.

We have entered the most concentrated hour of the intense presence and manifestation of demonic spirits. Such spirits are involved in both the affairs of political powers as well as Christianity. We must earnestly pray for God’s discernment to enable us not to be deceived. At the same time, we must pray for the discernment of God’s enablement to empower us to overcome the Devil and his angels.

In our next *Straightway* we want to further this End-time study of the powers of the Devil and where such powers are being manifested in great influence. May God enable us to overcome through Christ Himself and His Word, and the Holy Spirit. [5]

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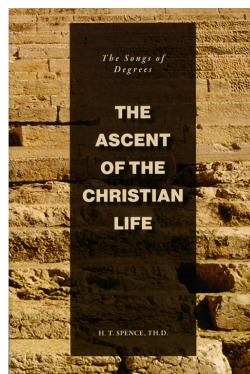
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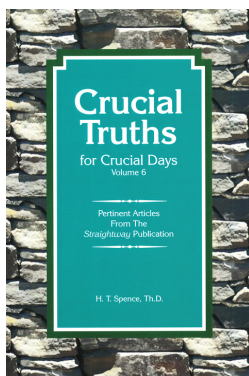
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